Wikipedia
Revisited

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How Did This Project Start?

https://unsplash.com/photos/E-Zuuev2XWo

Keep an Open Mind

http://alexgrey.com

Common Opinions About Wikipedia

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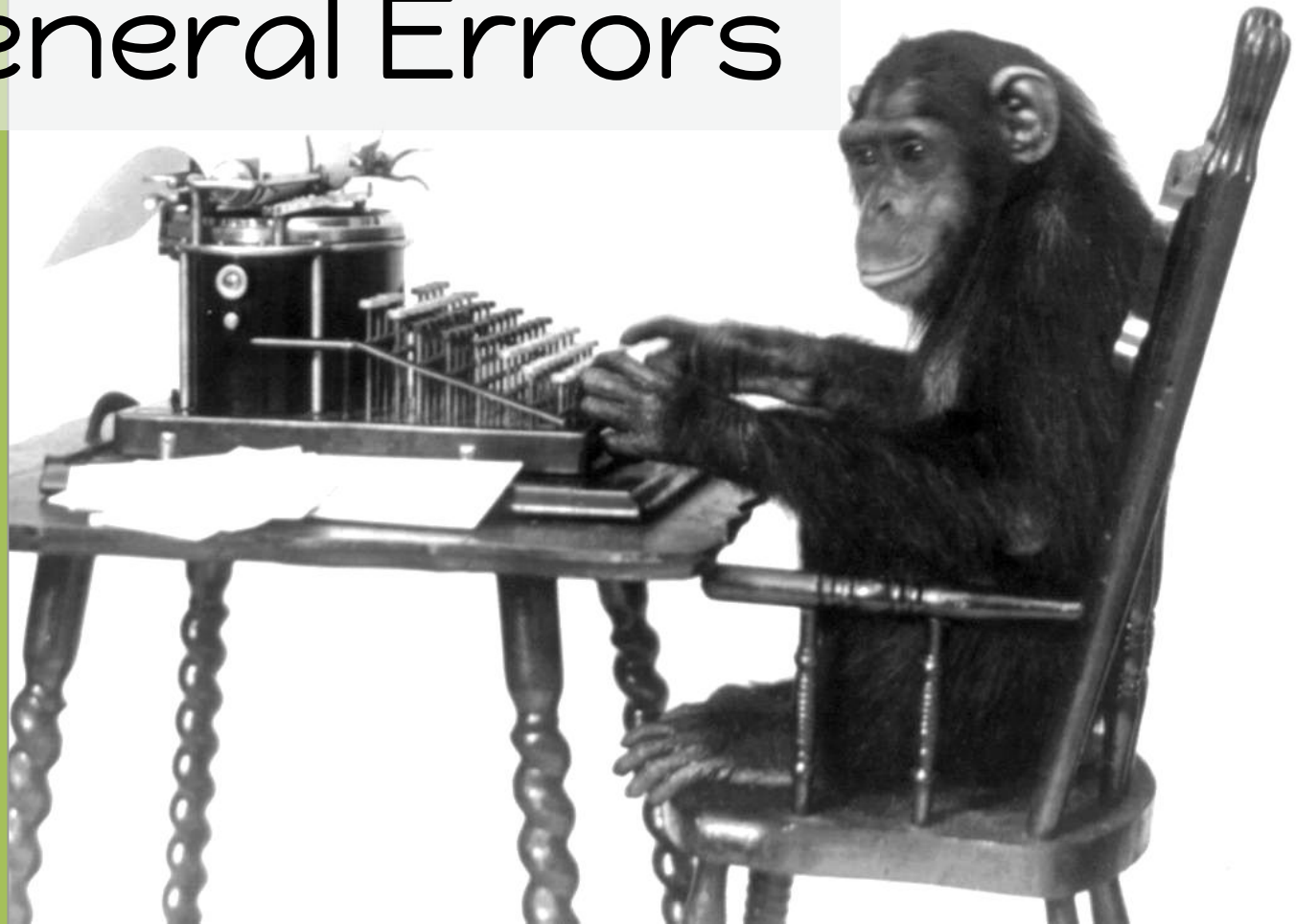
General Errors



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chimpanzee_seated_at_a_typewriter.tif

Bias

https://unsplash.com/photos/ASKeuOZahYU

Trolls

http://knowyourmeme.com

Vandals

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Taboo in Scholarship

(Rustad, 2017)

You can't use it for research

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It's Time to Take Another Look

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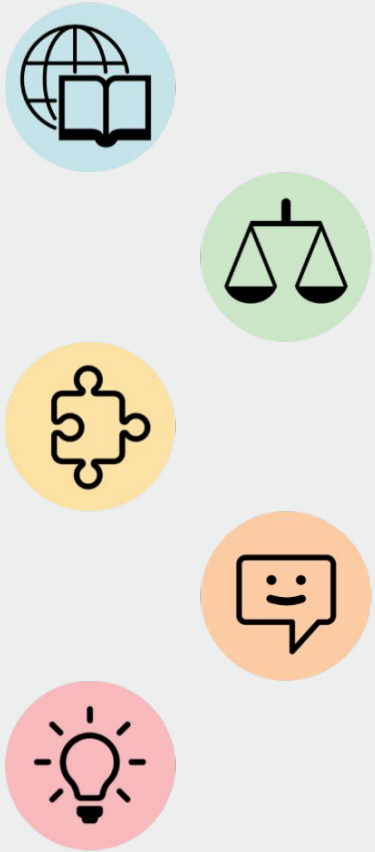
Wikipedia Five Pillars



- Wikipedia is an encyclopedia
- Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view
- Wikipedia is free content that anyone can use, edit, and distribute
- Wikipedia's editors should treat each other with respect and civility
- Wikipedia has no firm rules

(Wikipedia Five Pillars)

Reliability

[1550–60; < ML *relevant-* (s. of *relevāns*), special use of L, prp. of *relevāre* to raise, lift up. See RELIEVE, -ANT]
—**rel′e•vance, rel′e•van•cy,** *n.* —**rel′e•vant•ly,** *adv.*
—**Syn.** applicable, germane, apposite, appropriate, suitable, fitting. See **apt.**
—**Pronunciation.** See **irrelevant.**

re•le•vé (rel′ə vā′; *Fr.* rəl³ vā′), *n. Ballet.* a rising up onto full point or half point from the flat of the feet. [1925–30; < F: lit., raised, ptp. of *relever*; see RELIEVE]

re•lex•i•fy (rē lek′sə fī′), *v.t.*, **-fied, -fy•ing.** *Ling.* to replace the vocabulary of (a language) with words drawn from another language, while changing the grammatical structure. [1960–65; -FY] —**re•lex′i•fi•ca′tion,** *n.*

re•li•a•ble (ri lī′ə bəl), *adj.* that may be relied on; dependable in achievement, accuracy, honesty, etc.: *reliable information.* [1560–70; RELY + -ABLE] —**re•li′a•bil′i•ty, re•li′a•ble•ness,** *n.* —**re•li′a•bly,** *adv.*
—**Syn.** trusty, authentic, consistent. RELIABLE, INFALLIBLE, TRUSTWORTHY apply to persons, objects, ideas, or information that can be depended upon with confident certainty. RELIABLE suggests consistent dependability of judgment, character, performance, or result: *a reliable formula, judge, car, meteorologist.* INFALLIBLE suggests the complete absence of error, breakdown, or poor performance: *an infallible test, system, marksman.* TRUSTWORTHY emphasizes the steady and honest dependability which encourages one's confidence, belief, or trust: *trustworthy and accurate reports.* —**Ant.** undependable, questionable, deceitful.

re•li•ance (ri lī′əns), *n.* **1.** confident or trustful dependence. **2.** confidence. **3.** something or someone relied on. [1600–10; RELY + -ANCE]
—**Syn. 1.** confidence, trust, faith, assurance.

re•li•ant (ri lī′ənt), *adj.* **1.** having or showing dependence: *reliant on money from home.* **2.** confident; trustful. [1855–60; RELY + -ANT] —**re•li′ant•ly,** *adv.*

rel•ic (rel′ik), *n.* **1.** a surviving memorial of something past. **2.** an object having interest by reason of its age or its association with the past: *a museum of historic relics.*

relief² (defs. 2, 3)
A, bas-relief; B, high relief

re•lief•er (ri lē′fər), *n.* **1.** *Baseball.* See **relief** **2.** a person who, because of old age, indigence, disability, or the like, receives welfare benefits state. **3.** a person who temporarily replaces else. [1790–1800; RELIEF¹ + -ER¹]

relief′ map′, a map showing the relief of usually by generalized contour lines. [1875–80

relief′ pitch′er, *Baseball.* **1.** a pitcher brou game to replace another pitcher, often in a crit tion. **2.** a pitcher regularly so used, as oppos who regularly starts games. Also called **rel liefer.** [1945–50]

relief′ valve′, a device that, when actuate pressure above a predetermined level, opens tion to the excess above this level and reduce sure to it. Cf. **safety valve** (def. 1).

re•li•er (ri lī′ər), *n.* a person or thing [1585–95; RELY + -ER¹]

re•lieve (ri lēv′), *v.*, **-lieved, -liev•ing.** —*v.t.* or alleviate (pain, distress, anxiety, need, etc.) from anxiety, fear, pain, etc. **3.** to free from erty, etc. **4.** to bring effective aid to (a bes military position, etc.). **5.** to ease (a person) den, wrong, or oppression, as by legal means

A 2005 *Nature* study found that Wikipedia is almost as reliable as the Encyclopedia Britannica (Giles, 2005)

nature Vol 438|15 December 2005

SPECIAL REPORT

Internet encyclopaedias go head to head

Jimmy Wales' Wikipedia comes close to Britannica in terms of the accuracy of its science entries, a *Nature* investigation finds.

AP PHOTO/AL PROBST

One of the extraordinary stories of the Internet age is that of Wikipedia, a free online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit. This radical and rapidly growing publication, which includes close to 4 million entries, is now a much-used resource. But it is also controversial: if anyone can edit entries, how do users know if Wikipedia is as accurate as established sources such as Encyclopaedia Britannica?

Several recent cases have highlighted the potential problems. One article was revealed as falsely suggesting that a former assistant to US Senator Robert Kennedy may have been involved in his assassination. And podcasting pioneer Adam Curry has been accused of editing the entry on podcasting to remove references to competitors' work. Curry says he merely thought he was making the entry

particularly great: the average science entry in Wikipedia contained around four inaccuracies; Britannica, about three.

Considering how Wikipedia articles are written, that result might seem surprising. A solar physicist could, for example, work on the entry on the Sun, but would have the same status as a contributor without an academic background. Disputes about content are usually resolved by discussion among users.

But Jimmy Wales, co-founder of Wikipedia and president of the encyclopaedia's parent organization, the Wikimedia Foundation of St Petersburg, Florida, says the finding shows the potential of Wikipedia. "I'm pleased," he says. "Our goal is to get to Britannica quality, or better."

site's increasing influence, questioning whether multiple, unpaid editors can match paid professionals for accuracy. Writing in the online magazine *TCS* last year, former Britannica editor Robert McHenry declared one Wikipedia entry — on US founding father Alexander Hamilton — as "what might be expected of a high-school student". Opening up the editing process to all, regardless of expertise, means that reliability can never be ensured, he concluded.

Yet *Nature*'s investigation suggests that Britannica's advantage may not be great, at least when it comes to science entries. In the study, entries were chosen from the websites of Wikipedia and Encyclopaedia Britannica on a broad range of scientific disciplines and sent

Overall Reliability

- “We've examined many pages on Wikipedia that treat controversial topics, and have discovered that most have, in fact, been vandalized at some point in their history. But we've also found that vandalism is usually repaired extremely quickly—so quickly that most users will never see its effects.” (Viégas, Wattenberg, & Dave, 2004)
- “...instead of preventing errors, Wikipedia’s IQ assurance model focuses more on quick and inexpensive recovery.” (Stvilia, Twidale, Smith, & Gasser, 2008)
- “... the reliability of Wikipedia compares even more favorably to the reliability of those information sources that people would be likely to use if Wikipedia did not exist (viz., websites that are as freely and easily accessible as Wikipedia)” (Fallis, 2008)
- "”... even the revered Encyclopaedia Britannica is riddled with errors, not to mention the subtle yet pervasive biases of individual subjectivity and corporate correctness." And therein lies the rub: There is no one perfect way. Britannica seems to claim that there is. Wikipedia acknowledges there’s no such thing.” (Berinstein, 2006)

Reliability by Subject: Science & Medicine

- “Wikipedia articles on health topics contain few errors and are well referenced, while the information provided often lacks depth.” (Kräenbring et al., 2014)
- “In particular, Wikipedia articles were missing information on drug dosages, interactions and contraindications. However, it should be noted that the Wikipedia style manual for drug articles discourages detailed dosage information.” (Kräenbring et al., 2014)
- “...it seems that the participatory model of web usage and information dissemination, as exemplified by Wikipedia, does generate high-quality information about mental disorders such as depression and schizophrenia.” (Reavley et al., 2012)

Wikipedia is Not Perfect

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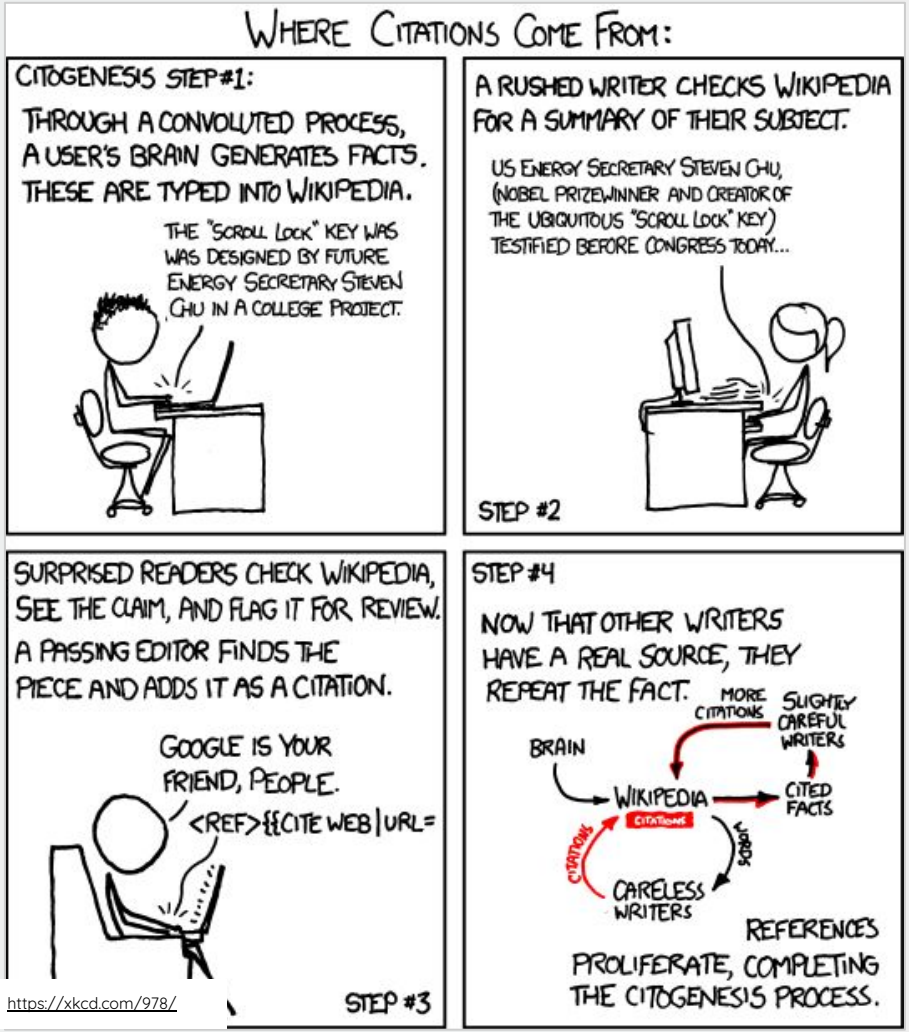

https://xkcd.com/978/

Citogenesis = Credibility Loop

Vandalism

- Experiments by first-time users
- Attention-seekers
- Well intended but misguided/ overzealous edits
- Vandal “wars”
- Authoritarian vandals= Wikipedia “police”
- Attempt to create humor
- Attempt to expose flaws in Wikipedia/ crowdsourced knowledge

(Wikipedia, Motivation of a Vandal)

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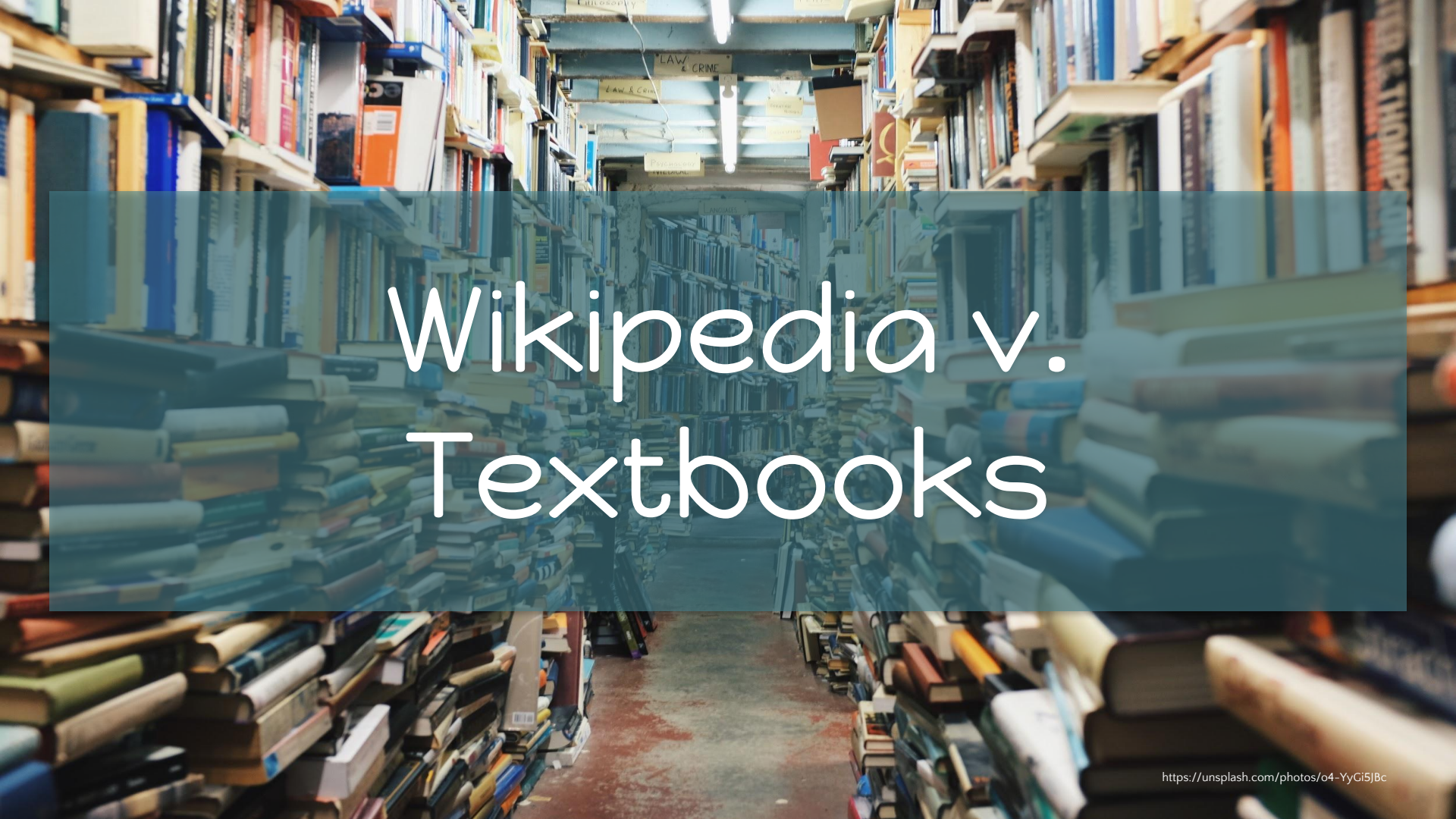
Wikipedia v. Textbooks



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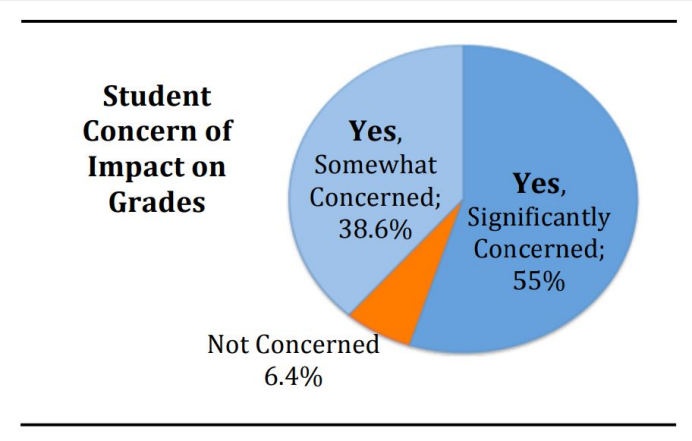
Textbook Prices

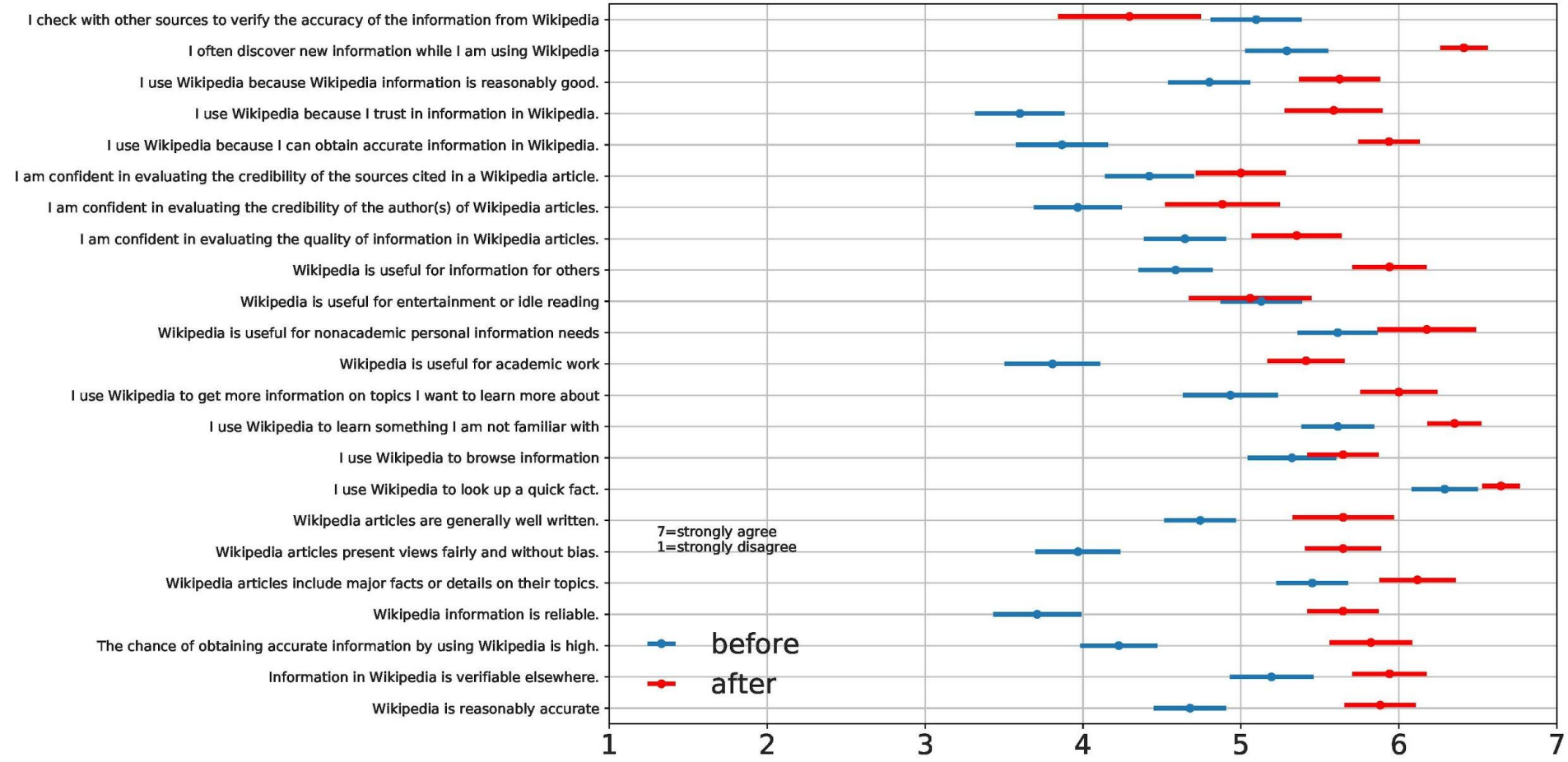
- Students spend an average of $1300 on textbooks and course materials per year (College Board, 2018)
- Textbook prices increased 1041% from January 1977- June 2015 (Money, 2015)
- Electronic access codes cost $100 on average and cannot be resold (McKenna, 2018)
- Nearly half of all students surveyed said that the cost of textbooks impacted how many/which classes they took each semester. (Senak, 2014)



(Senak, 2014)

Class Resource

- Brian Blais- *Weather and Natural Disasters*
- Wikipedia replaced a traditional textbook for class reading assignments
- Readings were supplemented by instructional videos and a handful of additional readings
- Students were asked to take survey about their attitudes towards Wikipedia at the beginning and end of the semester
- Students were able to earn extra credit for finding errors in Wikipedia, and additional points for correcting them



Results of the pre-post survey on the student attitudes toward Wikipedia. A clear trend is seen where student attitudes shifted towards in a more positive direction after a class which used Wikipedia as a textbook. The survey was based primarily on *How and why do college students use Wikipedia?* (Lim, 2009)

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What we did

- Attended a similar meetup at Boston University
- Targeted invitations and promotion to science faculty and students
- Scheduled the meetup for when most interested participants would be available
    - Held at lunchtime- provided snacks and drinks
- Provided opening briefing with shared goals and philosophy
- Gave instructions on how to edit wikipedia including brief instructional video

Our Shared Goal

Bryant University community members will positively contribute to open access scholarship by applying information literacy skills to creating, fact-checking, and editing Wikipedia articles.

Participant Instructions

- Know your audience
- Be bold, but not reckless
- Do not infringe copyright
- Cite everything you can
- Avoid shameless self- promotion
- Share your expertise, but don't argue from authority
- Write neutrally and with due weight
- Ask for help

(Ten Simple Rules for Editing Wikipedia)

Results

Strengths

- Strong faculty & library support
- Clear achievable goals
- Instructional materials met varying levels of expertise
- Time of day, length of session worked well

Opportunities

- More advertising
- Incorporate additional departments
- Invite honors students
- Schedule multiple sessions
- Make regular event (ex: 1st wednesday of the month)

Takeaways

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Key Takeaways

- Wikipedia isn't evil
- Wikipedia is often a source of credible information
- Wikipedia can be used to replace or supplement a textbook
- Our users benefit from learning how to evaluate sources and read with a critical eye
- Wikipedia is an encyclopedia- it does not replace original research
- People want to, and are going to, use Wikipedia
- It is freely available 24/7- this can be a significant benefit to those with limited resources

Questions?

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Continue the Conversation

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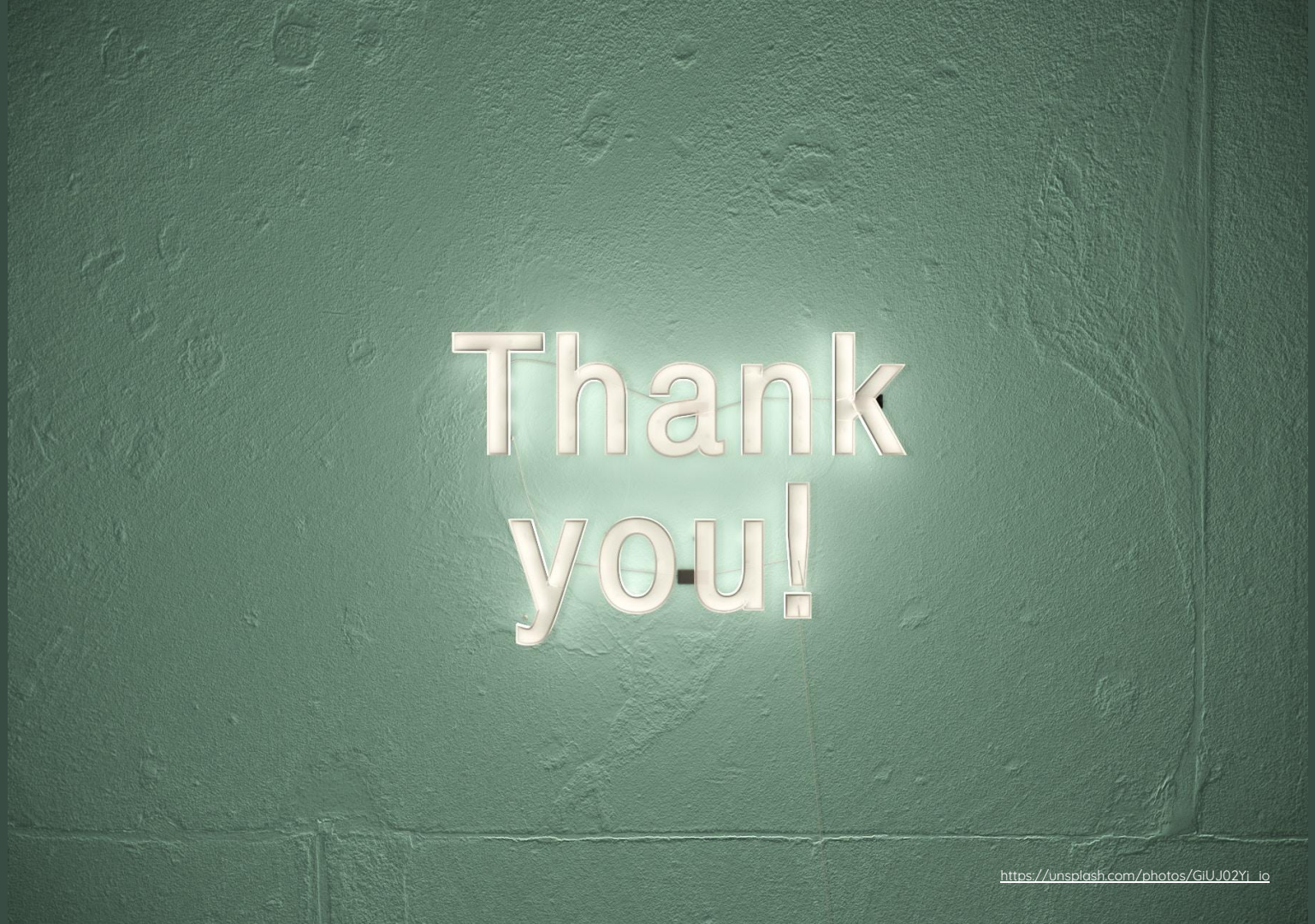

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